



Department of
HUMAN SERVICES

Mental Health and Disability Services
Easing Facility Restrictions

Updated October 5, 2020

In March 2020, the Iowa Department of Human Services (DHS) implemented safety measures that restricted operations at all six (6) facilities within the Mental Health and Disability Services (MHDS) Division. This occurred to mitigate and reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Throughout the pandemic, DHS has worked closely with the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH), the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals (DIA), and the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics (UIHC) to ensure staff and patient safety. DHS utilized guidelines developed by IDPH and the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the planning and implementation of safety measures.

This document outlines the ongoing, standard mitigation practices at DHS facilities and provides guidance on enhanced practices if DHS identifies transmission of COVID-19 within a given facility. Appendix A includes additional facility-specific strategies.

As guidance changes, DHS continues to communicate with employees, individuals served, and their families/guardians verbally and/or in writing.

Standard Practices

All facilities adhere to the following minimum practices when facility-based transmission is not suspected or confirmed.

Screening

- DHS considers all facility staff essential.
- All facility staff **must** undergo screening for COVID-19 prior to entry into facility buildings. Screening includes a questionnaire related to signs/symptoms, travel/exposure, and a temperature check.
- All individuals served **must** undergo screening for COVID-19 (including a temperature check) on a daily basis.

PPE

- All facility staff are required to wear a surgical/procedural mask whenever in patient care areas (e.g., cottages, wards, school, dayrooms). This includes contract personnel on-campus.
- If outside of patient care areas (e.g., administrative buildings), staff may wear cloth face coverings in lieu of surgical/procedural masks.
 - Such coverings must have at least two layers of cloth.
 - Per the [CDC](#), the effectiveness of gaiters is unknown at this time; as such, facility staff must not use gaiters when on campus.
- Facility staff entering patient living areas may also be required to utilize additional PPE such as gowns, gloves, and/or face shields.

Admissions

- All new admissions **must** undergo screening for COVID-19 signs/symptoms, including a temperature check. **NOTE:** *Facilities request COVID-19 testing prior to admission but require via the jail and juvenile services systems for admission into the state mental health institutes or the state training school, respectively.*
- All new admissions **must** quarantine for a minimum of fourteen (14) days before further movement within the facility. Facility staff provide essential services within the quarantine area as required.

Visitation

- Except for on-going use of virtual visits, facilities may still restrict visitation due to the COVID-19 county positivity rate, the facility's COVID-19 status, an individual's COVID-19 status, visitor symptoms, lack of adherence to proper infection control practices, or other relevant factor related to the COVID-19 public health emergency.
- Generally, facilities follow the below guidance.

	Low County Positivity Rate (<5%)*	Medium County Positivity Rate (5-10%)*	High County Positivity Rate (>10%)*
Outdoor Visitation: accessible and safe outdoor spaces such as courtyards, patios, parking lots, large tents, etc.	Yes	Yes	Yes
Indoor Visitation: facilities are encouraged to use of chat boxes, plexiglass separators, etc. when possible.	Yes Visitation should occur according to the core principles of COVID19 infection prevention and facility policies, as well as indoor visitation guidelines outlined in QSO-20-39-NH (beyond compassionate care ¹ visits).	Yes Visitation should occur according to the core principles of COVID19 infection prevention and facility policies, as well as indoor visitation guidelines outlined in QSO-20-39-NH (beyond compassionate care visits).	Yes, but limited. Visitation should only occur for compassionate care situations according to the core principles of COVID-19 infection prevention and facility policies.
Window Visits	Yes	Yes	Yes
Compassionate Care Visits (including end-of-life, and other life events listed above.)	Yes	Yes	Yes
Barbers and Beauticians	Yes, adhering to all mitigation steps.	Yes, adhering to all mitigation steps.	Yes, adhering to all mitigation steps.

*The state publishes county positivity rates [here](#).

¹Compassionate care visits are critical for residents in counties with reported positivity rates exceeding ten percent (10%). Facilities should use a person-centered approach, outlined in [QSO-20-39-NH](#), to identify the need for compassionate care visits. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has indicated the below as examples of compassionate care allowances.

- End-of-life scenarios.
- A resident, who was living with their family before recently being admitted to a nursing home, is struggling with the change in environment and lack of physical family support.
- A resident who is grieving after a friend or family member recently passed away.
- A resident who needs cueing and encouragement with eating or drinking, previously provided by family and/or caregiver(s), is experiencing weight loss or dehydration.
- A resident, who used to talk and interact with others, is experiencing emotional distress, seldom speaking, or crying more frequently.

Medical Trips

- Facilities should utilize telehealth whenever possible.
- Elective and non-elective appointments are allowed.
- Staff and patients must utilize appropriate PPE (at least using a cloth or surgical/procedural mask) for the duration of any appointments/transports.
- Quarantining to occur when appropriate.

Treatment

- On-campus employment opportunities involving contact with external products/partners are permitted with appropriate PPE, social distancing, screening, etc.
- Non-essential outings and external employment opportunities are allowed, provided appropriate PPE (e.g., surgical/procedural mask) is utilized throughout the duration and screening (including a temperature check) occurs prior to facility re-entry. **NOTE:** *For facilities utilizing Temporary Home Visits as part of the reintegration process, such visits may be authorized by the appropriate Superintendent with the expectation that the individual adhere to social distancing guidelines, appropriate use of face coverings, etc., throughout the visit. Upon return to the facility, the individual must undergo screening per facility protocol.*
- Facilities attempt to minimize the number of participants in any singular space to include recreation, treatment, and dining.
- Use of technology to deliver essential services is encouraged. This includes education, telehealth, etc.

COVID-19 Testing

- Facilities continue to test potentially exposed individuals and those exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, as determined by the [CDC](#).

COVID-19 Exposure

- Facilities follow IDPH and CDC guidelines regarding care and treatment for individuals who are exposed.

Enhanced Practices

The following practices take effect upon confirmed transmission of COVID-19 within a given facility, identified in either individuals served or staff. Unless otherwise directed by the Division Administrator (DA) for Mental Health and Disability Services (MHDS)-Facilities, a facility may return to standard practices after 14 calendar days since the last facility-based transmission occurs.

PPE

- Facility staff must utilize additional PPE such as N-95 masks, face shields, goggles, gloves, gowns, and shoe covers, as appropriate, when entering COVID-19-positive patient care areas.
 - If N-95 masks are not available or staff have not been fit-tested, staff may substitute a surgical/procedural mask, face shield, **and** goggles.
- When not in COVID-19-positive patient care areas but still on campus, all facility staff must wear surgical/procedural masks.

Visitation

- Facilities may restrict in-person visitation in consultation with the DA for MHDS-Facilities.
- Virtual visitation must continue.

Medical Trips

- In addition to the standard practices, only medically necessary or emergent appointments are allowed. No elective appointments are allowed.

Treatment

- Facilities may restrict non-essential outings and external employment opportunities in consultation with the Division Administrator for MHDS-Facilities.

COVID-19 Positive Test Results

- Facilities follow IDPH and CDC guidelines regarding care for individuals who test positive.
- Such individuals must be separately cohorted in a dedicated space with dedicated staff.

Appendix A – Facility-Specific Strategies

Civil Commitment Unit for Sexual Offenders (CCUSO)

1. Visits occur outside the facility in the shelter area of the CCUSO yard.
 - Visits are subject to cancellation if unsafe weather conditions occur (e.g. lightning, thunderstorm, extreme heat).
2. Visiting hours are 5:30pm-8:30pm on Tuesdays and Thursdays, as well as, from 11am-1:30pm, and 4:00pm to 6:00pm on weekends/holidays. **NOTE:** *This is to allow both yard access and visitation access.*
 - CCUSO yard activities would be shifted to the East yard on Tuesdays and Thursdays.
3. There will be a limit to the number of visitors allowed at any one time to promote social distancing. **NOTE:** *CCUSO will consider using plexi-glass barriers and non-soluble table tops to promote proper disinfecting between visits.*
4. Visitors are instructed to leave belongings in vehicles versus utilization of facility lockers.
5. CCUSO utilizes hand-held metal detectors for security screenings outside the sally port.

Cherokee Mental Health Institute (CMHI)

1. Visits occur outdoors (depending on weather and patient precautionary status) or in the family visitation area (depending on patient precautionary status); otherwise, visitation occurs in the ward interview room.
2. One (1) visit at a time in the designated location.
3. Visitation hours are 4pm-7pm, Monday-Friday & 12pm-6pm, weekends/holidays. **NOTE:** *Special arrangements can be made in advance through the Social Worker for those unable to visit during designated times.*
4. All visits are limited to one (1) hour unless otherwise indicated.
5. No visitors under the age of eighteen (18).
6. Will continue to restrict visitors on North 7, the designated ward for ill patients. Patients on this ward will continue to have the Skype option available to them.

Independence Mental Health Institute (IMHI)

1. Visits by 2 persons, by appointment only, in a central room off the unit or in a designated area on each unit.
 - Two adult visitors, or an adult with a child age 14 or older, are allowed.
 - Both visitors are limited to one hour of face-to-face visitation.
 - Visit supervised by staff to ensure patient safety.

Boys State Training School (BSTS)

1. Location is the A.E. Shepherd Building.
2. Hours are 9am to 3pm on Saturday and Sunday.
3. Three time periods for visits: 9am-11am, 11am-1pm, and 1pm-3pm. Visitors must sign up in advance by calling BSTS and reserving a timeslot.
4. Four students per slot with max of 2 visitors per student and no one under the age of 16.

Glenwood Resource Center (GRC)

1. Visitation/meetings at off-campus locations allowed.
2. Outdoor visitation (weather permitting) at Campbell Park or other isolated areas (e.g., House 254, Meyer Building, Chapel) allowed.
3. Transportation of resident involves a designated van.
 - Van will be disinfected by staff prior to use and after use.
4. If social distancing is not followed, the Superintendent will review circumstances/report from witnesses for housing resident in normal home or COVID-19 observation home.

Woodward Resource Center (WRC)

1. 200 Franklin Living Room Area, Campus Center, Shelter House, outdoor space (weather permitting) may be used for visitation. Off-campus locations can be considered.
2. All visitation is pre-scheduled through the house social worker.
3. Any issues or concerns with the above guidelines being followed will be reported to the Superintendent for review.